

Whatever happened to the Goldberg-Wilkins commission

The following story, written by Brian Boyer, appeared in the March edition of the Chicago Journalism Review. Obviously the meat of the story has appeared in two other publications. We hope it will be picked up from here and run elsewhere.

Assistant Attorney General Jerris Leonard has met secretly with the seven-man steering committee of the Arthur Goldberg commission investigating the death of Illinois Black Panther chairman Fred Hampton. Leonard told the steering committee at a meeting in Goldberg's New York law office that the Justice Department was preparing indictments against some or all of the 14 policemen who made the raid on Hampton's apartment last Dec. 4.

Leonard is head of the department's civil rights division, and is heading the Chicago grand jury investigation into the fatal shooting of Hampton and Peoria Panther leader Mark Clark by State's Attorney's police, in what was first described as a "shootout" during a search for illegal weapons.

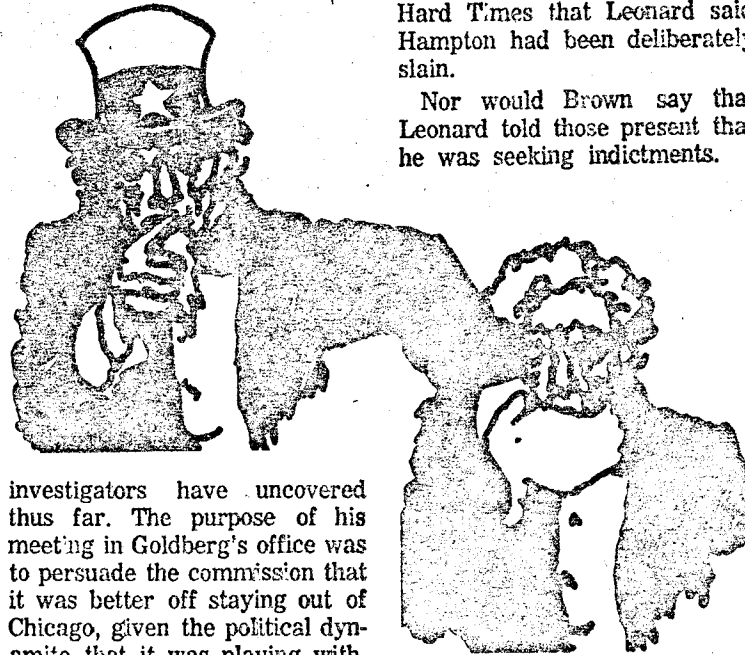
According to Hard Times, a Washington weekly which broke the story in its February 16 issue, Leonard told the Goldberg commission that Chicago authorities "planned and executed the murder of Hampton." Mark Clark's death was "accidental," the journal quotes Leonard as telling the commission.

PLANNED IN ADVANCE

The Washington Star picked up the story on February 19, confirming that the meeting took place and that Leonard has said the police indictments were planned. The Star story reported that Leonard said the raid was planned some time in advance,

with full knowledge that the target apartment was rented by Hampton and used as a Panther headquarters, but quoted one source at the meeting as denying that Leonard said the raid was staged with the express purpose of killing Hampton.

Leonard is obviously worried about the information which his



investigators have uncovered thus far. The purpose of his meeting in Goldberg's office was to persuade the commission that it was better off staying out of Chicago, given the political dynamite that it was playing with.

Present at the meeting in addition to Goldberg were Sam Brown, the Moratorium chief; Mrs. Martin Wright Edelman, director of the Washington Research Project; John Morsell, assistant executive director of the committee and Norman Amaker, staff director. Others of the steering committee, composed of Roy Wilkins (ill after surgery), head of the NAACP; George Lindsay of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law; former Attorney General Ramsey Clark and Dr. Kenneth Clark, urbanologist, were also there.

According to Sam Brown, the fact of the meeting was supposed to remain under wraps because of its delicacy. Leonard, for example, is not allowed under law to divulge the Grand Jury proceedings to outsiders. Brown reluctantly went along with the vow of secrecy and would not confirm the report of Andrew Kopkind from Hard Times that Leonard said Hampton had been deliberately slain.

Nor would Brown say that Leonard told those present that he was seeking indictments.

indictments against some or all of the policemen involved in the raid.

Kalb said that he got his story from two members of the committee who were present at the meeting. Kopkind, who broke the story, got his information from persons present and related to those at the meeting.

The two committee staff members and Brown all confirmed that the meeting had been held, but refused to say what was discussed. Goldberg had no comment on the entire matter and Leonard was unavailable for comment.

As an interesting sidelight, the Goldberg committee hasn't really got into its scheduled investigation because the Ford Foundation never came through with the hundreds of thousands it was going to contribute.

FOUNDATION STALLS

Morsell said things were going slowly because of the lack of money, and that cash was short because of the "politics" involved in the Panther issue.

"The (Ford) Foundation has been made apprehensive as a result of Senate investigations," he said. "The Foundation does not want to prejudice its whole operation as a result of one project."

One of the most unusual aspects of the affair is that Chicago bureaus and local report-

"I find it (my silence) difficult politically, but I can't rectify it," Brown said.

"If a trial doesn't come out (of the Grand Jury investigation) then we have a very different circumstance." Then, he said, he would open up.

Barry Kalb, in his Washington Star story of Feb. 19, reported that Leonard urged the commission to stay out of the Hampton case because it looked more like a political squabble than a criminal investigation.

He wrote that he was told by a committee member who was present at the meeting that Leonard said he was seeking

ers either do not read the Washington Star or Hard Times, or somebody decided that possible indictments in the Hampton slaying wasn't news.

Or maybe the politics involved are even hotter in Chicago than in New York and Washington